Testimony of Dr. Stephen Philip Cohen

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Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific
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I am grateful for this opportunity to share my expertise with the Subcommittee. South Asia is critically important to the United States today, and will continue to be so in the future.

America will use force to defend a vital interest, and for several years American forces have fought a war in Afghanistan, worked with the Pakistan military to round up the dregs of al Qaeda and Taliban, and are now training with India's armed forces.

Even if we win the so-called war on terrorism, there will still be a requirement for an American military presence in the region, possibly a base in Afghanistan. Further, our other regional interests will increase, not decrease. These include:

- A potential new strategic relationship with an India that is emerging as Asia's third great state, and climbing;
- The spread of nuclear technology and fissile material from India and Pakistan to other states and regions,
- The prospect of a serious war between these two nuclear-armed states, something that almost happened only three years ago;
- Pakistan's very future as a moderate state, the problem I will focus on today.

I am in substantial agreement with the Administration's new policy on South Asia. I believe that, if further refined and properly implemented, it will advance these American interests.

The policy, as announced does two important things:

First it attempts a coherent *South Asia* policy that tries to comprehensively address Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. It does not pretend that India is part of the Pacific, nor that Pakistan is a "Middle East" country. Our India policy has been formally de-hyphenated from our Pakistan policy.

(However, I am concerned that the administration may not pay enough attention to the prospect of another India-Pakistan war; it seems to hope that the present India-Pakistan dialogue will flourish, leading to some kind of agreement on Kashmir and other outstanding disputes; I am not that optimistic, and in any case, hope is not a policy.)

Second, the administration has, I believe, properly identified the real Pakistan problem. This problem is: *not* gaining compliance with our effort to round up Islamic extremists.

Pakistan has been helpful on this count, although there may be questions about whether they are going the last mile; the same is true of Pakistan's cooperation in revealing its clandestine support for the Iranian, Libyan, North Korean and other missile and nuclear programs.

The main problem is Pakistan itself, and its faltering political system, its dysfunctional social order, its dangerous sectarianism, and its distorted political system. Pakistan has over the years failed in each of these (and other dimensions), yet it seems to be surviving. Pakistan may be one of the few states which can be said to have achieved sustainable failure, but I am not comfortable with a nuclear-armed Pakistan driving at eighty miles per hour along the edge of disaster.

My guess is that this is how the administration sees Pakistan. Certainly, it seems to have learned some of the lessons from the 9/11 Commission Report. Whatever the reports gaps may be, it correctly diagnosed Pakistan's long-term prospects and the risks to America should that country go down the path of chaos and extremism. If that were to happen, relations with India would certainly deteriorate, Pakistan might again meddle in Afghanistan, and who knows whether or not it would again become the world's #1 exporter of nuclear weapons technology, or worse?

Now, to the specifics of the recent policy:

It makes sense to restore the sale of advanced aircraft to Pakistan, and even more sense to continue to expand our military training programs, as long as this is not linked *only* to its cooperation in rounding up Taliban and al Qaeda leaders, Our sales and our aid must be directly linked to the Pakistan government fulfilling its commitments to goals it has *already* declared to be important. These include:

- Ending sectarian violence in Pakistan (Musharraf's top declared goal since the 1999 coup)
- Genuine reform of the educational system,
- Rebuilding political parties and democratic organizations,
- Continuing economic reform, and
- Moving towards a rapprochement with India.

Of course, economic and technical aid is presumed to influence Pakistan's policies in many of these areas, but the most powerful political party in Pakistan is now the military (specifically, the army), and military sales and training is an important way of demonstrating that we are interested in Pakistan's survival and security.

We should use this rare opportunity to leverage the Pakistani elite, especially the military, to take steps that will give meaning to what General Musharraf calls "enlightened moderation." Right now, this term is a slogan, what is its content? As I have argued in my recent book, *The Idea of Pakistan,* Pakistan's performance in many areas raises doubts.

There must be explicit linkage between the quantity and quality of our military sales to Pakistan to Pakistan's performance along a number of critical dimensions. I do not think that Congress can get into the fine details, but it should ensure that a limited military relationship with Pakistan will not only be durable—that it will survive the end of the war on terrorism, but that it will be tightly linked to good Pakistani performance along a number of parameters.

Since such reforms have not only been frequently and publicly promulgated by the Pakistani leadership, and are in Pakistan's own interests, we should hold Pakistan to a high standard of performance. Pakistan must not be compared with Syria or Saudi Arabia, but with other Asian democracies.

I could go down the list, but in the realm of domestic politics Pakistan needs to begin the process of reform *right now* so that, as Secretary Rice has suggested, there will be free elections in 2007. Doing this will require the return of the exiled leaders of both of Pakistan's leading parties, the end to the army's comprehensive interference in domestic politics, and President Musharraf shedding his uniform, as he has pledged to do, well before the election.

Let me address two arguments against the proposed sale to Pakistan. One is that we are fueling an arms race in South Asia, the other is that the Pakistanis will take our support and continue to confront India, meddle in Afghanistan, and not carry out the kinds of reforms that they have promised.

The arms race argument is important, but less so after the region went nuclear. India and Pakistan had four major crises in the last sixteen years, but the last two, after they became nuclear weapons states, indicate that they are learning from their own experience.

Both sides understand that a conventional war could rapidly deteriorate into a nuclear exchange, my judgment is that the F-16s, for example, do not change this situation; neither India nor Pakistan can be assured that they can wipe out the nuclear forces on the other side.

Ideally, both India and Pakistan will slow down their military spending and reach a political agreement concerning their differences. However, we do not live in an ideal world. The best we can do is set a good example ourselves, and do nothing that would change fundamental strategic calculations in South Asia.

Will arms sales encourage Islamabad to resume confrontation with India by supporting terrorists from across the border, and fail to carry out needed reforms? I cannot predict the future, but if this happens then we should take two steps. One is that the military relationship should be cut back (or even terminated) to the degree that Pakistan does not do what it has promised (and which is in its own interest). When serving in the Reagan administration, I argued that we should make this linkage, but was obviously overruled. I also argued then, and believe that it is even more the case now, that we have another lever to use against Islamabad should that country regress: a still closer relationship with India. Unlike 1987, when we used Pakistan to defeat the Soviets in Afghanistan, it is the

long term danger of extremism (whether Islamic or otherwise) within Pakistan itself that is the problem. It is a problem not only for the United States, but for India and Afghanistan, and even China and Iran.

Let me conclude by making these final points.

- The United States should also work very closely with like-minded states regarding Pakistan, especially the major European allies and Japan.

- I am in strong agreement with another dimension of the newly formulated American policy—seeking a long-term strategic relationship with India, possibly providing New Delhi with advanced military and dual-use technology. I also believe that many Indians agree with the goal of a moderate Pakistan, as reflected in the recent statements by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders such as L.K. Advani and Jaswant Singh. Our respective policies towards Pakistan may even enhance U.S.-India relations.

All policies are in the end based upon a calculation of risk and gain. My judgment is that we run a small risk by rebuilding a military and security relationship with Pakistan now, and that doing so will help us avert a much greater problem in the future.

Biography: Stephen Philip Cohen

Stephen Cohen has been Senior Fellow in the Foreign Policy Studies program at the Brookings Institution since 1998, and is an expert on India, Pakistan, and security issues. Since 2002 he has been a co-convenor of the Brookings project on "The US and the Islamic World." Dr. Cohen is the author of ten books, including *The Pakistan Army, India: Emerging Power,* and the recently published *The Idea of Pakistan,* a book on Pakistan's future as a state, and the implications for Pakistan's neighbors and America. Current projects include a book on South Asia's recent crises.

In 2004 Dr. Cohen was named by the Association of Foreign Policy Associations as one of five hundred influentials in the making of American foreign policy. He taught at the University of Illinois for many years, where he co-founded the Program in Arms Control, Disarmament, and International Security. He has also taught at Keio University (Tokyo) and Andhra University (India), Georgetown University, and the School of Advanced International Studies, Washington. Dr. Cohen has consulted with many foundations and U.S. government departments, and served on the Policy Planning Staff, U.S. Department of State (1985-87). He was Scholar-in-Residence, Ford Foundation, New Delhi (1992-93), and was the co-founder of both the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (Colombo), and the Summer workshop on Security and Arms Control, for younger Indian, Pakistani, and Chinese scholars and journalists. Dr. Cohen speaks Hindi and Urdu. He is married to Roberta S. Cohen, and they have six children.

Contact: scohen@brookings.edu
O: 202 797-6015

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